# The Enabling Goal

*Create an environment that fosters the delivery of One VA world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources*

## Purpose and Outcomes:

The purpose of this objective is to ensure that the VA has the workforce it needs to serve veterans and their families, today and in the future. Like many organizations today, VA is faced with an unprecedented set of human capital challenges—an aging workforce, a shifting and expanding mission, a tight and competitive labor market, and the emergence of profound new technologies—that present both risks and opportunities. The ability of VA to prepare its workforce to meet these challenges will largely determine the extent to which the goals and strategies laid out in this strategic plan are achieved. Each of the major themes incorporated into this plan—enhanced health care delivery, expedited claims processing, partnerships, accountability—can come to life only through the efforts of a workforce with the capabilities, competencies, commitment, and compassion to make it happen.

## Strategies and Processes:

### Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is at the heart of building sustainable excellence into all parts of VA. It is also a disciplined activity that will require a major commitment of time, energy, and resources throughout the life of this Strategic Plan.

Workforce planning at VA involves three overarching tasks:

- Define the set of competencies and requirements for the current workforce;

> ### Objective E-2
> *Recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families*

- Define the set of competencies and requirements for the future VA workforce;

- Define a strategy for bridging the gap between the current workforce and what will be needed in the future.

To achieve the desired result, these tasks must be integrated into the "way we do things" among executives, managers, supervisors, and employees at all levels of VA . Workforce planning must be seen as an essential, ongoing part of mission accomplishment. The strategy that comes out of this process will be the roadmap for building the organizational capacity to bring the mission to life.

In support of this goal, VA will provide managers with a desktop workforce forecasting system that will facilitate the definition of current and future competencies and provide data for sound decision making.

### Employee Education

The VA Learning University (VALU) provides leadership for learning initiatives spanning the three Administrations and Staff Offices of VA. It serves as a catalyst for VA-wide learning initiatives that develop and sustain a high performance workforce. VALU coordinates the various educational entities within VA, and maximizes educational resources through collaborative efforts. To support achievement of VA's goals and objectives, VALU will identify strategic VA-wide learning priorities, promote innovation in approaches to learning, and

facilitate internal and external learning partnerships. VALU promotes building a *learning culture* within VA.

One current strategy already in progress is to develop and roll out a *One VA* employee orientation package that provides new and existing employees a better understanding of all VA programs, benefits, and services. Part of that package will include a *One VA* learning map to provide employees with a greater understanding of the realities driving change around them and to enhance their participation in VA initiatives for addressing those realities.

### *Diversity*

VA is committed to promoting efforts to ensure that its workforce reflects the diversity of the customers we serve, the Nation's veterans and their dependents. Diversity is essential to building a creative and innovative environment that can best understand and address the needs of the customers we serve. In order to foster this type of environment, VA will:
- Establish a diversity business model that capitalizes on the business, cultural, legal, and demographic dimensions and values of diversity in the workplace;
- Establish a *One VA* Diversity Business Council to examine and monitor VA's Employee Diversity Profile;
- Establish and communicate diversity competencies to VA leaders; and
- Reward VA leaders for crosscutting diversity initiatives.

### *Employee Satisfaction*

Employee attitudes are important drivers of employee behaviors, such as turnover, absenteeism, lost productivity, and grievances. These behaviors can help drive organizational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction, quality, and costs. When employees are satisfied with their jobs and work environment, they take pride in their work and are motivated to provide high quality service to veterans and their families.

To assess and improve employee satisfaction, VA will administer the *One VA* employee survey, determine where opportunities for improvement exist, and develop and implement integrated improvement plans around the priority opportunities. VA will:

- Identify employee satisfaction indicators which are highly correlated with measures of organizational outcomes;
- Utilize contractor assistance to administer the survey and create a baseline on those indicators;
- Establish action plans to raise employee satisfaction;
- Re-administer the survey annually to measure improvement in satisfaction and revalidate the correlation with organizational measures; and
- Help educate managers on the relationships between employee attitudes and organizational performance;
- Help leadership develop mechanisms to hold managers accountable for employee satisfaction as part of their annual performance plans.

Further, VA will help educate employees on how to actively encourage and support a workplace free of discrimination, sexual harassment, unfairness and inequity.

VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program for workplace disputes emphasizes VA's commitment to the early use of mediation at all levels to the maximum extent practicable in an appropriate and cost-effective manner. VA has established an agency-wide policy and process to support using mediation, in which an impartial third party assists parties in resolving workplace

disputes through their own negotiations. A steering committee is responsible for facilitating the exchange of ADR information and resources among various VA elements.

VA will develop and implement a system to monitor and evaluate whether the option of mediation is available to all VA employees for all workplace disputes. VA will also develop and implement a system to monitor and evaluate whether each VA employee is provided a basic understanding of mediation and the program available at their facility, so that they can make informed decisions about the mediation option. VA expects to fully implement this system for mediation by the end of FY 2001.

VA will enhance its relationship with its labor partners by working with the VA National Partnership Council (NPC). The NPC will continue to promote the establishment and improvement of partnerships through:

- training;
- consulting assistance; and
- assessments of the health of partnerships.

### External Factors:

In conjunction with the economy (job-market/ competitive salary issues), VA recognizes that funding to implement HR strategies will be the key to recruiting and retaining a highly skilled workforce.

**Performance Measures**

| Objective E-2<br>Service Delivery Measures | | FY 2006<br>Target |
|---|---|---|
| **Workforce Planning[1]ó** | Percent of current and future job categories that have defined competencies and requirements | 100%<br>(By 2002) |
| | Percent of job categories where gaps have been defined between current and future capabilities and requirements | 100%<br>(By 2002) |
| **Diversityó** | Percent of agency leadership, performance plans and/or performance agreements that contain diversity competencies | 100% |
| **Employee Satisfactionó** | Percent increase in the aggregate score on the *One VA* Employee Satisfaction Survey using FY 01 baseline | 10%[2]<br>(see footnote) |
| **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) ó** | Percent of employees that are aware of ADR as an option to address workplace disputes | 100% |

[1]  *Once system requirements have been defined, the outcomes of those systems can be established and measured.*

[2]  *Annual performance targets are subject to the results of the first two (FY 01 and 02) administrations of the survey. These surveys will establish baselines and determine what percent increase of employee satisfaction is reasonable.*